

Editorial Department.

THE feeling which might be entertained by some, that the discussion of such a topic is foreign to the scope of our JOURNAL, will not prevent us from giving expression in its pages to our individual opinions, in respect to the subject of medical education, which is now attracting renewed attention.

That the fullness of time has come for a practical advance on the part of the medical colleges in this country, instead of simply meeting in convention, making speeches and reports, and passing resolutions, it seems to us there can be no doubt. However much the present system may have been the offspring of necessity in earlier and cruder times, it would seem that to refuse now, in obedience to the plain demands of the profession, and of common sense, to raise the standard of medical education higher, will be something worse than unreasonable on the part of all who are reputably engaged in medical teaching. To continue to maintain in our colleges two sessions, of four or even six months each, practically as the whole of college instruction, preliminary to graduation, and thus to foster the miserable superficiality which has been and is yet, so common in this country, and hence to crowd to a still greater plethora, the profession with incompetent members, is simply criminal, in view of precious public and professional interests. Before two years shall pass, there ought not to be a reputable college in the land, which shall not have increased its period of study to three years, with sessions for instruction of from six to nine months each, and with liberal requirements as to preliminary study. This step on the part of the colleges would most likely lead to a great temporary diminution in the size of classes, especially graduating classes, and it

ought to have this effect. It is a burning shame that so many young "doctors" continue to go out from all our colleges, a large majority of whom cannot pass a respectable examination in the leading branches in medicine. These are the facts and not caricatures of the situation. We have no fear that any one will or can, successfully contradict them. Have the colleges no responsibility in this matter? Is it not possible for them to take at once a higher position? Most certainly. Back of all pleas, assertions, subterfuges, and neglect, is the plain possibility of, and crying necessity for, taking such a step. And it will be to their shame if the colleges do not take it.

The supply of incompetent practitioners, of the present period is quite large enough for some time to come, and the colleges need not make haste to add to their number in view of the real interests of the public, and honor of the profession. For our own part we would rather lecture to a half dozen thoroughly competent students, who have chosen to be reasonably thorough in their preparation for assuming the duties of a responsible profession, than to one hundred who have been gathered together, not with an intelligent purpose, to become properly qualified at all hazards, but with no well defined object except that of "getting through" in some way. By all means let the annual spectacle soon cease, of beholding those who hold the position of teachers, virtually abetting this mere bread and butter inspiration, which leads so many who are alike incompetent by nature and education, to enter its ranks. Until this is done, the line will continue to be as it is, a doubtful one, between the hosts lying within the outskirts of the professional camp and the hordes of unscrupulous quacks which invest it.

Henceforth let the distinction be broad and clear in fact, and not simply in name or tradition, as between intelligence and thorough culture on the one hand, and ignorance and incompetency on the other.

We have, in the various issues of the JOURNAL, fully discussed the subject of "localization" in cerebral physiology and pathology, and have expressed ourselves as in the main, believ-

ing in the doctrines of Hitzig, Ferrier, Charcot and others, especially in opposition to the views of Dr. Brown-Sequard.

Our readers were treated in our April number, to an extended account of the lengthy and remarkable discussion, which took place early in this year in the Biological Society in Paris, between Dr. Brown-Sequard, and MM. Charcot, Luys and others, in respect to this subject. In a recent number of the *Progres Medical*, (July 8, 1876, p. 506) we find a portion of the first of a series of lectures, by M. Charcot, on the subject of "localization in cerebral diseases," in which he re-affirms the doctrine in the following terms:—

"In these lectures, I propose," says M. Charcot, "to give the facts of anatomy and cerebral physiology which, in the present state of the science, serve for the basis of the doctrine of cerebral localization. These facts have been already, as you are aware, the subject of lengthy remarks in my course of the past year. If I return to them to-day, it is because the signification I have attributed to them, has been lately severely criticised by a *savant* especially competent to deal with the subject, one of the founders of the new physiology of the nervous system; I allude to my distinguished friend, Professor Brown-Sequard.

"In the presence of an opposition from so high a quarter, it became my duty to submit the question in dispute to a complete revision, to ascertain whether I had actually fallen into error and led others with me. In case I had found myself wrong, I would have been here to-day to resolutely confess my mistake and make honorable amends; but this has not been the case. My new studies, undertaken in the same direction as those stated to my hearers the past year, have strengthened my previous convictions."

Few, if any, have had such opportunities for the clinical study of this subject, as M. Charcot, and no one will question his honesty or ability, in interpreting the facts which came under his observation. We have no doubt but the views of M. Charcot and others who stand with him, will be confirmed by future research.

Since our last issue there have occurred several deaths of eminent medical men, more or less known in connection with researches upon the nervous system, and who therefore, call for notice in our pages. Among them we may mention Andral, of France, and Traube, of Berlin, who, though not strictly a neurologist, is yet widely known from his discoveries in regard to the functions of the pneumogastric nerve, and the nervous mechanism of respiration, as well as in connection with researches on the physiological action of digitalis. Dr. E. A. Parkes of the Military Medical School, at Netley, England, who had made extensive researches on the physiological action of alcohol, and Dr. Ludovic Hirschfeld, of Prague, the author of the well known Atlas of the Nervous System, are also among the eminent medical men who have died during the quarter.

In our own country we have to record the death of the distinguished alienist, Dr. George Cook, of Canandaigua, N. Y., who was killed by an insane patient, who had not been regarded as dangerous, and had therefore been allowed considerable liberty. Dr. Cook stood high in his department of medicine, and his death is a loss to American medical science.

In the April issue of this JOURNAL, there were unfortunately a number of typographical errors which we greatly regret. Dr. Goodwillie's article on facial neuralgia was especially unfortunate, also in the omission of a portion which in some way failed to reach us. We think, however, it is hardly any the less a valuable clinical contribution, though the cases omitted would doubtless have added somewhat to its interest.

We must also apologize here for some typographical errors in the earlier signatures of the present number which escaped our notice before the forms were sent to press. These occur mostly in the spelling of foreign words, and names with which the printers were unacquainted, and in which, consequently, mistakes were most likely to occur.
